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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: WEST DARFUR: JEM VOWS TO PROTECT ITS AREAS
FOLLOWING GOS ATTACKS

Classified By: CDA Roberto Powers, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) leader told FieldOff on February 10 that the Government of Sudan (GoS) had miscalculated in its February 8-9 attacks on the JEM-controlled West Darfur towns of Silea, Sirba and Abu Siruj. &JEM will come back to defend its areas,8 he vowed, in retaliation for what the GoS called &protection of homeland sovereignty8 in West Darfur. The United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) Force Commander is planning to meet JEM later this week to clarify UNAMID,s mandate with respect to the current situation in West Darfur and the Darfur peace process. Meanwhile the humanitarian crisis continues to test the capacity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in eastern Chad, whose reduced staff is struggling to prepare for an influx of 12,000 new refugees amidst renewed banditry and threats by the Chadian Government to expel the Sudanese refugees from its territory. END SUMMARY.

ATTACKS ON SIRBA, SILEA, ABU SIRUJ

¶2. (SBU) In a February 10 conversation with FieldOff, a senior JEM official accused the GoS of &genocide8 in West Darfur and predicted that it would continue for the foreseeable future. He reported that between 25,000 and 30,000 Sudanese from Sirba, Silea and Abu Siruj had evacuated those towns after GoS bombing on February 8-9 and were en route to Guereda in eastern Chad, although without adequate water or transportation. He reported that wounded refugees had already reached Birak (near Guereda) but were lacking medical care there. The JEM rep claimed that janjaweed attacks around Birak on these vulnerable populations were imminent.

¶3. (SBU) The JEM rep predicted that the GoS would also try to attack JEM-controlled areas north of Jebel Mun. He claimed the GoS had attempted to bomb there on February 9 but had been repelled by JEM forces. According to the JEM rep, the GoS miscalculated in its attacks on Sirba, Silea and Abu Siruj; he claimed JEM was not in these towns during the attacks. (NOTE: The JEM rep denies that the movement is currently in Chad, insisting instead that its members are spread throughout Darfur. We have not independently verified this assertion. END NOTE). The JEM rep also stated that since the towns are not part of GoS-controlled territory, "JEM will come back to defend them and to defend our people." &We have a right,8 he added, &to use all our weaponry to do this.8 The rep claimed that JEM is stronger than the GoS

both politically and militarily in West Darfur at the moment.

He claimed the GoS, campaign against civilians is serving only to drive them into the ranks of the JEM.

14. (SBU) Stating that the situation in West Darfur is &the worst it,s ever been,8 the JEM rep advised that &it,s no time for peace talks.8 He insisted that the international community and the USG in particular should recognize the &continuation of genocide8 by the GoS and take "serious steps8 accordingly, including exerting increased pressure on the Government. He expressed hope that pressure would counter the false sense of security that he considered the GoS now has about its ability to operate with impunity in West Darfur in the absence of international scrutiny. He called for further sanctions against the GoS as a response to the "prejudice8 that the international community exhibited against the JEM (NOTE: The USG imposed unilateral sanctions against JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim in May 2007. END NOTE).

GOS REACTION AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES

15. (SBU) For its part, the GoS is using claims of &homeland sovereignty8 and territorial integrity to defend its latest West Darfur offensive. According to February 11 local media, the MFA accused the JEM of having attacked Silea, Sirba and Abu Siruj in an attempt to clear the towns of GoS police, resulting in subsequent civilian displacements.

16. (C) Presidential Advisor and Sudan Liberation Movement leader Minni Minawi told Polchief February 11 that he views the GoS attacks on Sirba, Silea, and Abu Siruj in the context of ongoing GoS attempts to dislodge African tribes from their traditional lands and replace them with Arabs. He claimed that most of the inhabitants of these three towns (the combined population of which he estimated at 60,000) are from

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the Eirenga tribe (but also include some Massalit and Tama). He noted that, according to press reports, at least 12,000 inhabitants of the three towns have now been forced to flee into Chad as refugees, which he claimed is part of the broader GoS &genocidal policy to Arabize Darfur.8 Minawi characterized the Eirenga as a peaceful African people who have not been involved in the Darfur conflict. However, since JEM had briefly occupied these towns (Minawi corroborated JEM claims that the JEM were not there when the GoS attacked), Minawi said the GoS used that as a pretext to drive out all African inhabitants so that Arabs who are more sympathetic to the Khartoum regime could take over the land.

17. (C) Minawi, himself a Zaghawa, is convinced that the Khartoum Arab elites &since the time of Sadiq al-Mahdi8 have wanted to exterminate the Zaghawa, as they represent the only fighting force capable of resisting Arab hegemony. Minawi even viewed the GoS-sponsored rebel attack on Chad as an attempt to get an Arab regime in power in N,djamena. He claimed the GoS plan was that when Chadian rebels Erdimi (an ethnic Zaghawa) and Nouri (an ethnic Gorane) took power, the GoS knew that the two would fight for control and hoped that Chadian Arabs would rise to power. He claimed the GoS flew Ahmed Sebian (who Minawi claimed is a former Chadian Ambassador who now lives in Europe) into El Geneina via Khartoum to participate in the attack on N,djamena. Minawi claimed that other Arab countries in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Libya, must have helped Sudan finance the rebel attack on N,djamena. However, he said now that Deby had survived, Libyan leader Qadafi would support Deby financially to restore good relations. (COMMENT: We certainly cannot vouch for the accuracy of any these claims, but view them as worthy of reporting nonetheless because Minawi is in frequent contact with Deby,s commanders in N,djamena and some of his views are probably shared by Zaghawa commanders in Darfur and Chad. Not without reason, Minawi tends to view everything in Darfur and Chad as a conspiracy of Arabs against Africans, and particularly his own Zaghawa tribe. END COMMENT).

CHADIAN CRISIS WORSENS

¶8. (SBU) UNHCR staff remaining in eastern Chad confirm JEM and press reports that 12,000 new refugees are headed for Guereda and that UNHCR personnel are planning assessment missions to the border in preparation for this arrival. UNHCR on February 11 reported attempted carjackings in Iriba, north of Guereda, amidst reports that the GoC is renewing calls for all Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad to be returned to Sudan.

¶9. (SBU) The JEM rep was firm that Chadian President Deby was in undisputed control of the country. He added that Chadian rebels had already retreated to Darfur, and he warned about subsequent problems because of this presence for Chadian refugees who had fled into West Darfur to escape the fighting on the other side of the border.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: The attacks on the three towns in West Darfur appear to represent an attempt by the FAS to regain control of territory that the JEM had taken from them - at a moment when the JEM was reduced in numbers due to its support for President Deby in Chad. We have no way to independently verify whether some JEM fighters were present in the towns when the FAS attacked, though a bombing campaign against an area that the JEM had vacated seems disproportionate. Given the cross-border population flows of refugees and fighters, West Darfur appears increasingly unstable but the situation may calm down as the fighters in the Chadian conflict regroup. With its newly-signed Status of Forces Agreement, UNAMID should act on its mandate and investigate what happened in this latest FAS attack. UNAMID also needs to reengage the Ceasefire Commission and actively work with the JMST to urge the Sudanese Government and rebels toward a renewed ceasefire agreement, with the support of the international community.

POWERS